

WXPost
JAN 8 1974

White House Disowns Ford's View on Tapes

JAN 8 1974

By Lou Cannon
Washington Post Staff Writer

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., Jan. 7—The White House indicated today that Vice President Gerald R. Ford was speaking on his own Sunday when he suggested that there is room for compromise on tapes and documents that President Nixon has refused to turn over to the Senate Watergate committee.

"The Vice President was speaking as Vice President," said deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren. "But the facts are that nothing has changed since the President's letter."

Mr. Nixon wrote committee chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. last Friday, refusing to honor three committee subpoenas seeking nearly 500 Watergate-related tapes and documents and describing

the request as an attempt at "unconstitutional usurpation of power."

Samuel Dash, the committee's chief counsel, has indicated the committee's willingness to reduce its requests to high-priority items before pursuing a second lawsuit, and Ford appeared Sunday to be hopeful that the White House would take a less unyielding view toward a scaled-down subpoena.

"I hope and trust as we go down the road perhaps there can be some compromise," Ford said on the NBC interview show. "Meet the

Ervin said in an interview with the Associated Press in Morgantown, N.C., that he would welcome a compro-

See PRESIDENT, A6, Col. 4

PRESIDENT, From A1

mise, but added: "The agreement should be written so there could be no misunderstanding."

Privately, White House officials appeared to be anxious to avoid any concessions to the Watergate committee in advance of a determination in U.S. District Court on the committee's suit to obtain five White House tapes of conversations between Mr. Nixon and his deposed counsel, John W. Dean III.

The court rejected a committee request for the tapes last October, but Congress has since passed legislation giving U.S. District Court jurisdiction over Watergate committee subpoenas.

There appeared to be differences of tone between the White House's unyielding public position reflected in the President's letter to Ervin and in the private statements of high administration officials.

One highly placed White House aide said it would simply be "premature" for the President to express a willingness to compromise before he sees what is requested in the "reduced list of materials" that the committee will seek. Another official pointed out that it would be relatively easy to compromise on some of the documents that already have been turned over to the Watergate special prosecutor.

After a news service story on Warren's briefing said that the White House had "no plans" to yield any of the documents, Warren called reporters and backed off slightly from his formal comments. He said the White House would examine any new request from the committee and "evaluate it based upon the attitude reflected in the request."

Warren said, however, that the basic position of the President was unchanged and that he had not discussed the issue with Ford since sending the reply to Ervin.

Two new White House officials joined the presidential party in San Clemente today and one departed unexpectedly.

Arriving in the worst winter weather of Southern California during the past quarter century were counselor Bryce Harlow and Domestic Council Director Ken Cole Jr.

Roy L. Ash, director of the Office of Management and Budget, flew back to Washington Sunday night for a meeting with the President's economic advisers on the economic impact of Mr. Nixon's impending budgetary decisions.

Ash, who spent Saturday meeting with White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr., was scheduled to meet today with the President. Warren said the two men would have met if Ash had remained.

However, Mr. Nixon was described by some aides as turning more and more of the budgetary issues over to his subordinates rather than dealing with them directly. Warren rejected this interpretation, but gave no reason for Ash's abrupt departure other than his previously scheduled meeting in Washington.